(don't) lie to me by bywheelers (inavertently)

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Summary:

Mike pulled at the end of his sweater, his eyebrows furrowed in annoyance. "I look absolutely ridiculous, don't I?"
Will chuckled, and was about to say that, "No, Mike, you look fine" but what came out of his mouth instead was, "You look absolutely stunning." which *what the fuck*, he hadn't meant to say that.

(don't) lie to me

Everyone knew of the existence of soulmates, and how you could recognise them, but it wasn't an exact science so while the process was the same, the time differed. You could have meet your soulmate just yesterday and you could know, but then again, you could have meet them 3 years ago and it would only be manifesting now. Not everyone was the same, and Will guessed that with everything he had been through, even recognising his soulmate was going to be different.

It all started the day after Christmas, when they were supposed to meet at Mike's house to have a celebration just between the party members. Will had arrived way earlier than he was supposed to, and he was just hanging out with Mike in his room, the latter complaining about some new sweater his mother had bought for him in spirit of the festivities and which he had to wear even though he thought is was a monstrosity. The offending garment was a vibrant red, with little dancing reindeers in the middle and decorated with snowflakes all around it.

Mike kept pulling at the end of it, his eyebrows furrowing more and more the longer he glanced at it. "I look absolutely ridiculous, don't I?"
Will was pretty sure that at that point Mike hadn't even meant for Will to answer as he was more just complaining to himself and muttering every now and then. But for some reason he felt like something was compelling him to answer. He chuckled, and was about to say that, "No, Mike, you look fine" but what came out of his mouth instead was, "You look absolutely stunning." which *what the fuck*, he hadn't meant to say that.

They both froze in their tracks, a tense silence suddenly overtaking the previously comfortable atmosphere.

Will was panicking inside, having a screaming battle with his brain because that was such a betrayal, he really should not have said that, and he really hadn't meant to. These were the kind of things that Will just kept inside and never voiced to anyone, and he had succeeded for so long but now his hard work was going to go down the drain

because he hadn't been able to shut his mouth for one second. He risked a glance over to where Mike was seated, to gouge out his expression, only to be meet with another pair of eyes focused on him. Will felt his breath catch in his throat. Mike was looking at him as if he could see everything Will was trying to hide, he felt like he was exposed to the core and Mike's eyes could take in everything he had been repressing so far. Mike furrowed his brows just a little bit more, his gaze more piercing than ever, and Will was about to die from the lack of oxygen before Mike's features softened, a gentle smile replacing the thin line his lips were set in before.

"Thanks, Will." is all Mike said, before his attention drifted someplace else, and Will felt the relief catch up to him in full force, his whole body slumping over from the tight position he'd been holding for what felt like an eternity.

They've never talked about it again, but that night Will caught Mike looking at him more than once with a thoughtful expression on his face, before looking away, going back to what he was doing as if nothing had happened. Will felt the rush of blood rapidly making its way to his face every time Mike did that, wondering what was happening between them.

From then on, it was like something fundamental had changed in their relationship, and it didn't seem to stop there, because the more time passed the stranger their interactions became.

The second time it happened, they were all together in the old junkyard, talking about the oncoming dance at school. Max had announced, not long after they had all arrived, that she and El (the nickname stuck, even when she was officially Jane now, it felt too weird to call her that) were going to go together, which didn't really surprise anyone since they had been dancing around each other since forever. The only ones left without a partner were the guys, therefore it was what they were trying to discuss.

When the attention panned out to Will, Dustin asking him if he had someone in mind whom he was going to ask, he started to fidget. Truthfully, he did have someone he wanted to ask, but he was too scared to do it, not wanting to complicate things. He smiled nervously before he mumbled out, "I don't really know whether to ask

anyone. I mean, who would want to dance with me anyway, right?" And Will was going to make it a joke, really, because he did know someone with whom he could go and not make a big deal out of it since they would be helping each other mutually, but before he could get anything else out past his lips, Mike suddenly whipped his head around, looking ready to murder someone. "I would!" And then, probably realising what he'd said, and the way he'd reacted, his face went through a myriad of expressions, starting from a confused tilt of his eyebrows and ending with a hopeful spark in his eyes. "I will. I mean, if you want, we could... totally go, you know, together."

Will could feel his cheeks burning, probably redder than a tomato by the time Mike finished talking. He had a hard time comprehending that Mike had just basically, and indirectly, asked him out to the school dance. It was one thing to actually think about it and daydream that it could happen, and another to hear it for real, and even while the reality was nothing like how he had imagined it, it couldn't have been better. Will smiled sweetly at Mike, giving him a small "sure" which probably didn't mean as much to Mike as it did to Will, but the bright smile he received in return really made him think otherwise.

Meanwhile, everyone else was watching with rapt fascination the scene unfolding right in front of their eyes, wondering how two people could be as obvious as those two were.

The third time it happened, it was only the two of them. They were playing video games at Mike's when Karen had leaned on the basement's door and asked Will whether he was going to spend the night there or go home. Will looked at Mike, who was already looking at him, and before Will could ask him if it was okay to spend the night, Mike beat him to it and told his mother that "yes, Will is staying".

They waited until Karen answered them and went away to start giggling and to plan what they were going to do throughout the night. Different ideas were tossed around, some of them thrown away while others were taken right in, and while they had decided to do a lot of things, it didn't take too long for either of them to fall asleep. They had spent majority of the time watching movies, and commenting on every single one, talking about everything and

anything, before they were too sleepy to do anything else. Will feel asleep on the sofa, awkwardly hanging of one side, while Mike had fallen asleep on the sleeping bag meant for Will.

Everything had been peaceful until then, small sounds filtering from outside but not bothering either of them, until it wasn't anymore.

Mike woke up from his slumber with a start, a weird feeling overtaking his body and making him paranoid. He stilled in the sleeping bag, not moving an inch and trying to make out if there was anything suspicious going on. He didn't hear anything for a minute, so he was about to go back to sleep, annoyed with himself for sensing things were they weren't, before a small whimper broke through his musing and made him quiet again. He slowly sat up, looked over the couch where Will was resting and noticed his form trembling, and before he knew what he was even doing, he was already by Will's side, shaking him gently to bring him out of whatever nightmare he was having. It didn't seem to affect Will much, as his whimpers grew louder and his trembling got worse, practically trashing all over the couch. Mike was panicking inside while trying to calm down Will with both hands on his shoulders, and calling his name louder and louder, to see if he woke up.

It didn't take long for Will to open his eyes in shock, trying to sit up only to butt heads with Mike who was leaning close to him. They both groaned in pain, Will's nightmare momentarily forgotten in the sudden silly scene, grabbing at their foreheads and looking at each other funnily. One second later, they were laughing and trying to be quiet about it so that no one else in the house could hear them, though doing a terrible job at it. However, the tense mood did shift to a more comfortable one.

Slowly, the laughing stopped, and while Mike would have loved to just let it be and let the calm feeling that had washed over the both of them continue, he needed to know that Will was alright. It had been years since he'd had nightmares, and while it happened now and again, he hadn't know they were so bad. He settled on the couch by Will's side, theirs arms and knees touching in a comforting gesture, Mike softly nudging his head against Will's. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Will sighed, slumping completely on Mike, feeling the exhaustion catch up with him. "It's just the same as always, you know. I'm back again in the Upside Down, but this time, not alone. Though I wish I was because what I keep seeing is worse than just me being there. Just... I keep walking and, I keep seeing it... and I try to run but it's always the same everywhere I go and..." Will chocked up on a sob, Mike feeling the vibration of his trembling from where they're pressed up together. He brings an arm around Will and cuddles him to his chest, trying to bring some reassurance to Will that he's not there, in that terrible place, and that he's alright and so is everyone else.

Will's sobs died down after a few minutes, and Mike moved away for a moment so he could see Will's face and whip his tears away. He cupped Will's face in both of his hands, brought them close together so their foreheads were touching and whispered, "You're okay, you're not there anymore, alright? And you will never be if I have a say in it. And no one else will be going there either. You're safe and so is everyone else, okay?" Will nodded before he hugged Mike, his embrace tight, and Mike circled his arms around Will's lower back, moving them around a bit so they could lie down on the couch all cuddled up together. Mike started to stroke Will's head and he felt Will sigh in relief, the warmth of his breath brushing against his neck. Mike grabbed the blanket that had fallen down on the floor sometime during the whole ordeal and put it over both of them.

Before he drifted off to sleep, Will's voice filtered in his sleepy mind, " You don't have to do this for me, you know?" Mike smiled, and even if he had tried he couldn't have stopped himself from answering back, "I know, but I want to. And unless you specifically ask me to stop, I will keep doing it. Always."

This time, Will's tears fell for an entirely different reason.

And so, the list of slip ups went on.

It was weird that they always told each other the absolute truth, like they couldn't help it. No matter what the situation was, if one asked the other a question, even indirectly, they just had to answer, as if someone else took control over their brain and just made them do it. It continued to go on, months of them panicking inside every time

they answered a question with an answer that felt too personal, too intimate for just friends, until the bubble burst out. Like a faucet that had been open for a long, long, time and it finally reached the full capacity of its container, making if pour over.

It was around that time of the year again when Will felt most vulnerable no matter how much time had passed, halloween just being around the corner, that he made a new friend.

A new kid had transferred into their senior class, who coincidentally enough had their locker right next to the one assigned to Will. It didn't take long for them to become friends and get along like a house on fire, especially since they seemed to have a lot in common and their personalities were very much alike, so Will enjoyed greatly his new friend's company. As it seemed, not everyone had taken so well to the idea of having one more guy into the party, and Mike was pretty obvious in his dislike for this new guy that appeared out of nowhere.

At first, no one really called him on it, thinking that maybe he just needed to get to know Will's new friend, Jack, better and that with time he would grow on Mike, just like it had happened with Max. Contrary to popular belief, that did not happen. Mike quietly fumed on his own, his mood worsening the more and more time Will spent with this Jack guy, feeling like he was losing something very important to him, like sand slipping through his fingers, and he didn't like it. Not one bit.

The little box where Mike kept his bottled up feelings burst open one sunny day. He had woken up feeling better than he had in weeks, his mood having improved and he was ready to go to school, maybe chat up a bit with Will before the teacher arrived and he could invite him over for a sleepover since it had been a while since they had one of these. Though really, at that point Mike just wanted to spent some time with his best friend, no matter what they were doing.

However, all went to hell when the first thing he saw when he stepped on the school grounds was Will looking very comfortable and happy hugging Jack. They seemed to be in their own world, not noticing anyone or anything happening around them and Mike just lost it. He marched up to where they were standing, he put a hand on

each of their shoulders and separated them before slipping inside between the two so he was practically acting as a barrier. Mike glared at Jack before loudly stating, "I have to talk with Will..." He paused for emphasis, before he continued, voice low, "alone." and he grabbed Will with an arm around his shoulder and practically flew them out of there.

They didn't stop walking until they arrived at Will's house. Will had tried to ask Mike what was going on, or why in the world they were leaving the school when they had classes, but the hard look on Mike's face put a stop to Will's inquiries and he let Mike lead to whatever place he wanted to go to.

Mike let Will go when they were at their destination, beginning to pace around while Will got more and more confused.

Before long, his confusion turned to slight annoyance since Mike wasn't saying anything, and taking on the initiative, he decided to be the one to break the silence. "What is wrong with you Mike?" The incredulous look Mike sent him made Will even more annoyed, because really, how did Mike expect him to know what was going on if he didn't talk about it?

"What is wrong with me? Seriously? Can't you see?"

"See what Mike? All I can see is you being a huge jerk to someone who's done nothing wrong to you!"

Mike scoffed. "Of course, you're defending him now."

Will rolled his eyes, getting fed up with Mike's behaviour. "Honestly, Mike, what is your problem?"

"My problem!" Mike cried. "My problem is that you've been spending all your time with this new guy that appeared literally from out of nowhere. And he thinks that because you've been so friendly with him, he already knows everything there is to know about you, and it's pissing me off. I keep asking you to do something after class, but all you seem to be able to tell me nowadays is 'Oh Mike, sorry, I promised Jack god knows what' and it's always 'Jack this' 'Jack that' and there is no place for anyone else. He's been slowly but surely

stealing you away from ME!"

Mike stoped there, wheezing hard since he hadn't taken a single breath in his rampage, realising he'd already said more than he had initially wanted to say. He hadn't meant to sound so childish, like Will was something that belonged to him and he was mad someone else had taken him from under his nose, because Will was definitely not a belonging. He was just Will, his best friend, the person Mike cared about the most and the one person that could push all of Mike's buttons and bring him to the limit. Mike had felt his feelings being pushed and pushed until he hadn't been able to control it anymore, and the dam that had been so tightly closed before had exploded, and everything he had felt inside, all these ugly feelings that had plagued his mind, made it on the outside, leaving Mike an open and vulnerable book.

He looked up and caught Will's gaze, which was a blank mask, leaving Mike to wonder how he felt after hearing all that. Mike shuffled his feet, his heart beating frantically inside his chest, waiting for whatever Will would tell him. He was pretty sure that he had ruined their friendship, what with how petty Mike had acted and the way he'd reacted.

He was about to apologise, try to salvage what was left of their friendship, maybe ask Will to forget everything that's happened and let him know that he wasn't going to act like that ever again, that Will could be friends with whoever he wanted and Mike wasn't going to get between his happiness. Regardless, before anything could come out of his mouth, Will spoke before him.

"You're such an idiot, Mike."

And Mike was going to agree, that, "yes, he had been an utter moron but that it wasn't going to happen again" and try to apologise, again, and ask for Will's forgiveness, but he stopped short when he saw Will advancing towards him, face still a careful blank, not giving away anything.

Mike held his breath, waiting until Will was so close to him that he could count perfectly his eyelashes, or kiss him if he so much leaned a little bit forward. Mike's mind halted once that thought registered,

stopping himself from thinking anything else. He had done enough to ruin their friendship, there was no need to add more fuel to the fire.

So Mike broke from his thoughts, let his mind become a white canvas, and turned his attention on Will, who's blank look was slowly dissipating, his features becoming gentler, his cheeks now a slight pink and his lips forming a beautiful and lovely smile. And it came down on Mike, while taking in the details of Will's face, that he was in fact head over heels in love with his best friend. The same best friend he had gone off onto because he was spending more than with some unknown kid, than with him. He had tried so hard, practically kicking himself for even entertaining the idea but the way he'd reacted, both before, like an overzealous boyfriend and now, like a lovesick fool, really made it hard to deny it anymore.

His acceptance had Mike turning scarlet, the tips of his ears and his cheeks burning in intensity, and Will watched everything, an amused smile playing on his lips.

"Are you alright, Mike? You look ready to pass out."

Mike groaned at Will's teasing, on one hand happy that Will wasn't reacting as badly as Mike had thought, and dreading, on the other hand, that Will was going to tease him mercilessly for having acted like a dumbass.

"Oh my god! Stop looking at me, okay? I know I fucked up, but god, I'm so embarrassed right now. I think I will just go and take a long trip and never show my face around here again. Goodbye Will, it was nice knowing you, but I can't let you see my face anymore now."

Will chuckled, stepped even closer to Mike, brought his hands up to circle around Mike's back so he was hugging him closely, but with enough space between them than they could look at each other. A few silent minutes passed, neither of them saying anything, just holding onto each other and smiling warmly at one another.

Will was the one to break the eye contact, resting his head on Mike's chest and listening as his heart went *thump, thump, thump*, beating just a tad faster than was probably normal, but justified in the situation he was in. "Ask me what I'm thinking."

"What?"

"Just ask me."

"Alright, alright. What are you thinking, Will?"

"That I love you."

Mike felt everything inside him align, like there had been an unfinished puzzle just waiting for that last piece that would complete it, and Mike had finally found it in Will, his soulmate. Now everything made sense, the reason they had just spilled their guts to one another even when they hadn't been planning to.

"Ask me too."

Will chuckled, but did as he was told. "What are you thinking, Mike?"

"That I love you too."

("This doesn't mean I've forgotten about your poor behaviour, Mike. We will be talking about this."

"I know.")

Author's Note:

> i will just let myself out now....
> (tumblr)